



**TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMISSION**

**CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

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**TO:** Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

**FROM:** Thanh H. Dang, Public Works Planner

**DATE:** September 9, 2008

**RE:** Transportation Safety Commission Minutes for September 4, 2008 Meeting

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The Transportation Safety Commission met on Thursday September 4, 9AM, at the Community Development classroom at 409 S. Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chairman), Thanh Dang, Drew Williams, Len Van Wyk, Ben Wyse, MPO Greg Deeds, Sgt. William Keller, Calvin Ferrel, Sgt. Felicia Glick, and Reggie Smith.

Guests present included: Jim Beierle, Public Works; Shawn Adams, Public Works; Brad Reed, Public Works

*Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.*

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Welcome

**1. Special Presentation: Traffic Engineering staff presentation on Traffic Light Synchronization**

Ms. Thanh Dang introduced Mr. Shawn Adams, Traffic Signal Systems Analysis, Mr. Brad Reed, Traffic Analyst, and Mr. Jim Beierle, Traffic Superintendent. Mr. Adams and Mr. Reed make up the Transportation Demand Management Team at the Public Works Department. Mr. Adams and Mr. Reed presented to the Commission an overview of their responsibilities, current and future projects related to

transportation planning and traffic signal signalization. Mr. Adams and Mr. Reed also explained some of the current technological restraints to coordinating multiple corridors together.

The following corridors are already coordinated: Main St downtown (lights are pre-timed, non-actuated). The following corridors have been worked on (and will be continuously monitored and revised as needed): Port Republic Road (Bluestone to Forest Hill), Reservoir Street (Evelyn Byrd to Neff), and S Main St (South Ave to Cantrell). The team plans to work on the corridors in the near future: High St (Maryland to Gay or 3<sup>rd</sup>) and E Market Street (Linda/Burgess to Chestnut Ridge).

Mr. Ben Wyse stated that at some lights bicyclists have a hard time getting the green light – presumably they are not being picked up by the camera. When bicyclists and motorcyclists are having this problem, they should contact the Public Works' Traffic Engineering Division so that the light cameras can be adjusted appropriately.

## Old Business

### **1. Railroad Crossing at S Main Street and Country Club Road – Update**

Ms. Dang gave an update. The City's Engineering departments worked up further concepts and are working on cost estimates. Mr. Dang is waiting on approval of the concepts from Scott Snow, Norfolk Southern.

### **2. Prohibiting left turns at intersections off Port Republic Road – Review**

Ms. Dang shared the following data with the Commission as requested from last month's meeting:

February 1, 2007 – January 31, 2008

Intersection (Port Republic Rd)	Left Turn Accidents	Total Accidents
With Devon Lane	8	9
With Hunters Road	2	2
With Bradley Drive	7	7
With Forest Hills Rd	1	9
With Northbound I-81	4*	5
With Southbound I-81	1	1
With Crawford Ave	6	6

\*One of these accidents with a pedestrian

A discussion between the Commission members was had. Mr. Len Van Wyk added that signs encouraging visitors to enter downtown via Port Republic Road might increase the number of accidents at Crawford Avenue in the future, as visitors do not expect abrupt stops for left turns. Mr. Bill Blessing said that to prohibit left turns on Port Republic Road, alternative routes would be needed. Additionally physical barriers would also need to be installed. Commission members also agreed that a middle two-

way left turn lane (TWLTL) may help motorists traveling on Port Republic Road make left turns, but it does not improve safety for motorists making left turns out of side streets onto Port Republic Road.

The Commission agreed (as it did in June 2008) that from a safety perspective left turns into and out of non-signalized entrances and intersections on Port Republic Road should be prohibited. However, the Commission recognizes that to prohibit such movements would severely limit access to and from businesses and neighborhoods. Alternative routes/connections, particularly from Hunters Road and Bradley Drive would need to be provided. The Commission recommends that Port Republic Road continues to be reviewed by staff, and that alternative routes/connections be further explored. Until another request is brought to the Commission, they will discontinue discussion of this issue.

### **3. Ingress/Egress on Vine Street at East Market Street Sheetz/Chamber of Commerce – Review**

Upon further review of accident data by Commission members, the Commission upholds its past recommendation to put up posts/diverters to prohibit left turns in and out of Sheetz's northernmost entrance, requiring vehicles turning out of Sheetz to go to the traffic signal. Additionally, the Commission recognizes the alternative option of the Chamber of Commerce to purchase adjacent property to construct an alternative entrance which would give additional stacking distance at the light at Vine St and Country Club Road. Until another request is brought to the Commission, they will discontinue discussion of this issue.

### **4. Waterman Dr & Chicago Drive Intersection – No Updates**

### **5. Denton's building parking lot and Southwest corner of Court Square**

Public Works staff recommended and the Commission agreed that either bollards to planters could be installed at the corners of the building to improve the line of sight between motorists and pedestrians. Ms. Dang shared that in discussions with Eddie Bumbaugh, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, that planters would be aesthetically preferred. The planters at the corners would require pedestrians to walk away from the building walls and into the motorists' line of sight. Ideally, planters would reduce the travel way width from 15'9" to 12". Ms. Dang is scheduled to meet with Mr. Bumbaugh later that day to meet with property owners to further discuss.

### **6. Traffic Accident Data – Review**

Ms. Dang sent Commission members February 1, 2007 – January 31, 2008 traffic accident data. Commission members agreed that the data in its given format is difficult to review on a citywide level (as opposed to a request to review accident data at a specific intersection). Chairman Blessing suggested that CeCe Dodds, Police Department, be contacted for further suggestions.

Mr. Reed inquired whether the Police Department had the capability of geo-locating accident locations. Sgt. William Keller said that at this time they do not. However, the Police Department has plans for new software and equipment that will give them this capability.

**7. Intersection of Vine and Washington Streets (Requested by Laura Quass-Ferdinand, 530 Viewmont Court)**

Ms. Dang shared with the Commission the Signal Warrant Study conducted by Traffic Engineering staff. At this time, given current volumes and conditions, a signal at the intersection of Vine and Washington Streets is not warranted. Chairman Blessing will write a letter to Ms. Laura Quass-Ferdinand.

**8. All Red, Pedestrian Phase for traffic signal at Gay Street and High St/Virginia Ave (Requested by Capt. Gregory)**

Ms. Dang presented that it is not possible at this signal to program an all red pedestrian phase for two twenty minute intervals because there is a limit of 8 possible phases for signals and all are currently being used. The Commission discussed that the crossing distance on Route 42 is long and that the crossing guard at this location is having a difficult time managing motorists making right and left turns. The Commission suggests that the school consider adding an additional guard at this intersection. The Commission requests that staff explore whether increasing the crossing times would help and Sgt. Keller will observe the crossing guard to determine if additional training is needed.

**New Business**

**9. Removal of signal at intersection of Mason and Bruce Streets (Requested by Public Works)**

The Public Works Department requests that the Commission consider removal of the signal at Mason and Bruce Streets. A Signal Warrant Study was conducted at this location and found that based on volume of traffic and available sight distance that a signal is not warranted. Mr. Ben Wyse expressed that the City Transit Buses go through this intersection daily. Mr. Adams suggested that like other motorists, bus drivers should use their discretion for when to pull out. Mr. Reggie Smith was not at the meeting to comment at this time, but in an email Mr. Smith stated that his department has three buses that use the intersection each hour, twelve hours per day.

Sgt. Felicia Glick expressed concern for pedestrians crossing Mason Street at various locations and stated that motorists often speed on Mason Street. Sgt. Keller agrees that this signal slows down motorists. Chairman Blessing stated that signals should not be used as a traffic calming measure.

Sgt. Glick also stated that with increased traffic downtown, specifically to the Hardesty-Higgins House and the Library (located at the corners of Bruce St and Main St) that the Commission might consider keeping the signal. Mr. Wyse added that the Urban Exchange might also add pedestrian traffic at this intersection.

Mr. Drew Williams suggested that a Traffic Signal Removal Study be conducted - the signals could be put on flash for a given period of time to see how motorist behavior changes. (The lights on Bruce would flash red, and Mason would flash yellow.) The Commission agreed to this study and staff will report back at next meeting.

## **10. Bicycle and Motorist Education (Requested by City Council)**

The Commission discussed this issue at length and agreed there are a number of ways to develop and release public service announcements. Ms. Dang and Chairman Blessing shared that there are a number of efforts underway by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization's (HRMPO) Bicycle & Pedestrian Education Committee. The latest effort is the "Walk Smart, Bike Smart" tent at the International Festival September 27 and new Public Service Announcements about every quarter aired on WSVN, Q101, etc. Other efforts by Safe Kids of the Central Shenandoah Valley, RMH Community Health, and the local schools are also occurring, but mostly focus on young children.

The Commission recognized that additional efforts to target and educate college age and adult bicyclists are needed. It was agreed that reaching the appropriate audience will be a challenge. Ms. Dang suggested soliciting the help of the City's Public Information Officer. Mr. Van Wyk suggested that in the meantime city staff could develop a webpage with "rules of the road" for bicyclists and motorists and ask JMU to send a mass email to all students, faculty, and staff.

After developing a public service announcement campaign cost, additional funds may be requested from the Commission to implement. There may also be some effective and innovative enforcement mechanisms to "correct" bicyclist behavior.

Other Business

None

**Next Meeting: Thursday October 2, 2008, 9AM, at Community Development Classroom, 409 S. Main Street.**

Adjourn